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SUBJECT: UK EXPECTATIONS FOR THE MAY 26-27 FOREIGN
MINISTERS MEETING (GAERC)

REF: STATE 54639

Classified By: Political Counselor Richard Mills for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

(C/NF) The UK expects discussion of the Western Balkans to be a major item on the May GAERC agenda. Martin Shearman, the Foreign Office's EU Correspondent, provided the following readout of UK expectations for the GAERC in response to ref:

-- Western Balkans. This will be the UK focus, according to Shearman, and London will work to keep the discussion "on track, especially with regard to Kosovo." The UK Government wants all Members to remain unified on the position that the handover from UNMIK to EULEX is not subject to Serbian agreement; London expects some wavering behind closed doors but no public stepping away from that position at the GAERC. London is frustrated that the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia cannot be signed next week because it is still undergoing translation and legal checks, but is confident it will be ready for signing by June.

-- Iraq. Shearman anticipates strong, positive conclusions on Iraq, including discussion of practical assistance the EU can provide. London will push other EU Members in the discussions next week to raise their political and diplomatic profiles, as well as that of the EU, in Iraq.

-- MEPP. London does not expect a lengthy discussion on MEPP. The GAERC will issue a statement in support of the Annapolis Process, but that also expresses concern about Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the situation in Gaza. Balanced against this will be a condemnation of rocket attacks from the territories into Israel. Shearman speculated that most Members are pleased with the recent announcement of Israeli-Syrian talks and the signs of "life" in the MEPP after the President's visit to the region, so the mood of the MEPP discussion, accordingly, will be more "upbeat" than usual.

-- Georgia. There will be no agreement at this GAERC to use the European Instant Assessment Mechanism to investigate the April 20 shoot-down. London is frustrated that, having created the Mechanism, the EU is dragging its feet to implement. Shearman said that any EU actions and decisions on Georgia were postponed until UNMIG's assessment of the elections and situation on the ground, expected at the end of next week.

-- Afghanistan. London is pleased with what it anticipates will be a strong endorsement of the upcoming Paris Conference and the need for "robust" contributions. GAERC discussion will focus on improving cooperation between ISAF, UNAMI and NATO; the UK has some ideas it will raise in the discussions (nfi). The issue of improving coordination on the ground between NATO and ISAF will also be discussed in the meeting of Defense Ministers at the GAERC.

-- Belarus. Shearman confirmed that, to his understanding, Belarus will not be on the agenda. He offered no immediate

response to ref points.

-- Zimbabwe. The EU is in agreement on the need to press the government of Zimbabwe to conduct the run-off elections fairly and allow international monitors free access.

-- Lebanon. London's goal is a statement out of the GAERC that bolsters the Arab League's efforts, calls for all parties to honor UNSC resolutions, and condemns acts of violence from all sides. Shearman expects that there will be consensus on this message.

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